

Hamilton Field, Airmen's Open Mess
(Facility No. 642)
First cul-de-sac on F Street
Novato
Marin County
California

HABS No. CA-2398-CW

HABS
CAL
21-NOVA,
ICW-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HAMILTON FIELD Airmen's Open Mess (Facility No. 642)

HABS
CAL
21-NOVA,
ICW-

HABS No. CA-2398-CW

Location: Hamilton Army Air Field
Novato, Marin County, California
Airmen's Open Mess
Facility No. 642 (first cul-de-sac on F Street)

U.S.G.S.: Novato, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1954 (revised 1980)
Petaluma Point, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1959 (revised 1980)
UTM Coordinates: Zone 10; A: 542100/4213620; B: 544720/4212220;
C: 542760/4210650; D: 541040/4212600

Significance:

Building 642 is considered significant for its association with Air Force history in northern California, and with World War II actions in the Pacific Theater. This mess hall originally served the particular air group that occupied the barracks on what is currently known as WAF Hill and was used as a cafeteria and later as a clubhouse for women housed in the WAF quarters. As a social gathering center for the WAFs, this building served an important function on base and was the only facility catering to this group, increasing its importance.

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) for a comprehensive Statement of Significance and individual report HABS No. CA-2398-A for a condensed Statement of Significance.

Description:

The airmen's open mess is an irregularly shaped one-story structure with intersecting and cross gable composition shingle roofs. Both large and small louvered vents are located in the gable ends. A low-pitched gable roof straddles the main roof, giving the appearance of dormers with side-by-side multi-light wood double hung sash windows.

The building is of frame construction with horizontal board siding clad with asbestos shingles. The foundation is concrete pier and an understory of braced wood posts on the north and west sides where the hill drops away. A front porch is supported by square posts and provides access to the central front multi-panelled double entry doors. A covered Craftsman-style walkway leads from the street to the porch and the primary entrance.

Several additions and alterations have been made to the original structure over the ensuing years, but the original floor plan has not been significantly altered. Most noticeable is a shed-roof addition on the front of the building; it provided entry to the kitchen area.

**HAMILTON FIELD
Airmen's Open Mess
(Facility No. 642)**

HABS No. CA-2398-CW Page 2

Interior rooms in the mess consist of a kitchen, several small rooms for offices, a card room, men's and women's laboratories, a refrigerated room, a large dining hall, and a large main room for dancing and entertaining. Wall coverings are modern composition wood paneling over plasterboard. Flooring is eight-inch-square red and green vinyl asphalt tile over tongue and groove wood subflooring. Ceilings are suspended acoustical tiles. An elevated bandstand is located in one corner, and a bar with counters is on the rear wall.

Heating systems consist of forced air gas heaters; all duct work is exposed. Original lighting fixtures are of the "schoolhouse" type, with a canopy and suspended milk glass bowl shade. Replacement lights are industrial type open end double tube fluorescent fixtures mounted flush with the ceiling or suspended on rods and chains.

Latrines have ceramic tile floors, with one- by one-inch, one- by two-inch, and two by two-inch tiles. Walls are clad in four- by four-inch ceramic tile. Sinks are enameled cast iron wall-mounted, made by Standard; each has a mirror. "Standard" wall-mounted urinals and Standard Sanitary Corp. Pacific toilets separated by wood stall partitions are located in each latrine. Lighting fixtures are recessed chrome and glass.

The mess hall is located on a hill top with a commanding view of the hangars, administrative area, and San Pablo Bay. Concrete walkways surround the building and provide access to barracks on the hill. Historic plantings consist of poplar, acacia, and Osage orange trees, as well as pyracantha shrubs. According to informants, the rose bushes on WAF Hill were planted by members of the Women's Air Force when they occupied the barracks.

Historical Context:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) and Section B in report HABS No. CA-2398-F.

This mess hall was built in June 1944 for \$20,492.82, and was intended to serve the airmen in the nearby barracks. Although it was built for airmen, by the late 1940s it served members of the Women's Air Force living in the nearby barracks. Additions made in the 1950s include an outside mechanical equipment shed and a barbecue area.

Sources:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) and Section B in report HABS No. CA-2398-F.

**HAMILTON FIELD
Airmen's Open Mess
(Facility No. 642)**

HABS No. CA-2398-CW Page 3

See the project Field Record, roll 9, exposures 1-12; roll 10, exposures 10-12; roll 11, exposures 1-6; roll 20, exposures 1-9; roll 64, exposures 7-12; roll 66, exposures 1-12; and roll 67, exposures 1-9.

The line drawn sketches were drafted on site in 1994 by Keith Syda, scanned into a computer and drawn by Christopher MacDonald in 1995, and corrected and finalized by Claire Warshaw in 1996 (all PAR Environmental Services, Inc. staff).

Project Information:

Hamilton Army Air Field is owned by various federal entities including the Department of the Navy, Department of the Army, United States Coast Guard, and General Services Administration (GSA). The Army/GSA parcels are being excessed and sold to private developers. The Navy property is included in Base Closure and Realignment actions.

As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) that the excess sale will have an affect on properties at the air field, and that these properties are components of a district that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Based on consultation with the OHP and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into by the interested parties in March 1994. The agreement stipulated that prior to excess sale the Army must contact the HABS/HAER division at the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, to determine the appropriate level and kind of recordation for the subject properties. The MOA further stipulated that copies of the documentation be made available to the OHP and appropriate local archives designated by the OHP. This recordation has been prepared in order to meet those stipulations.

Text prepared by: Mary L. Maniery/Judith Marvin

Title: Historian/Architectural Historian

Affiliation: PAR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, INC., Sacramento, California

Date prepared: July 1995

Photography prepared by: David De Vries

Affiliation: Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California

Date of photographs: May and June 1993

